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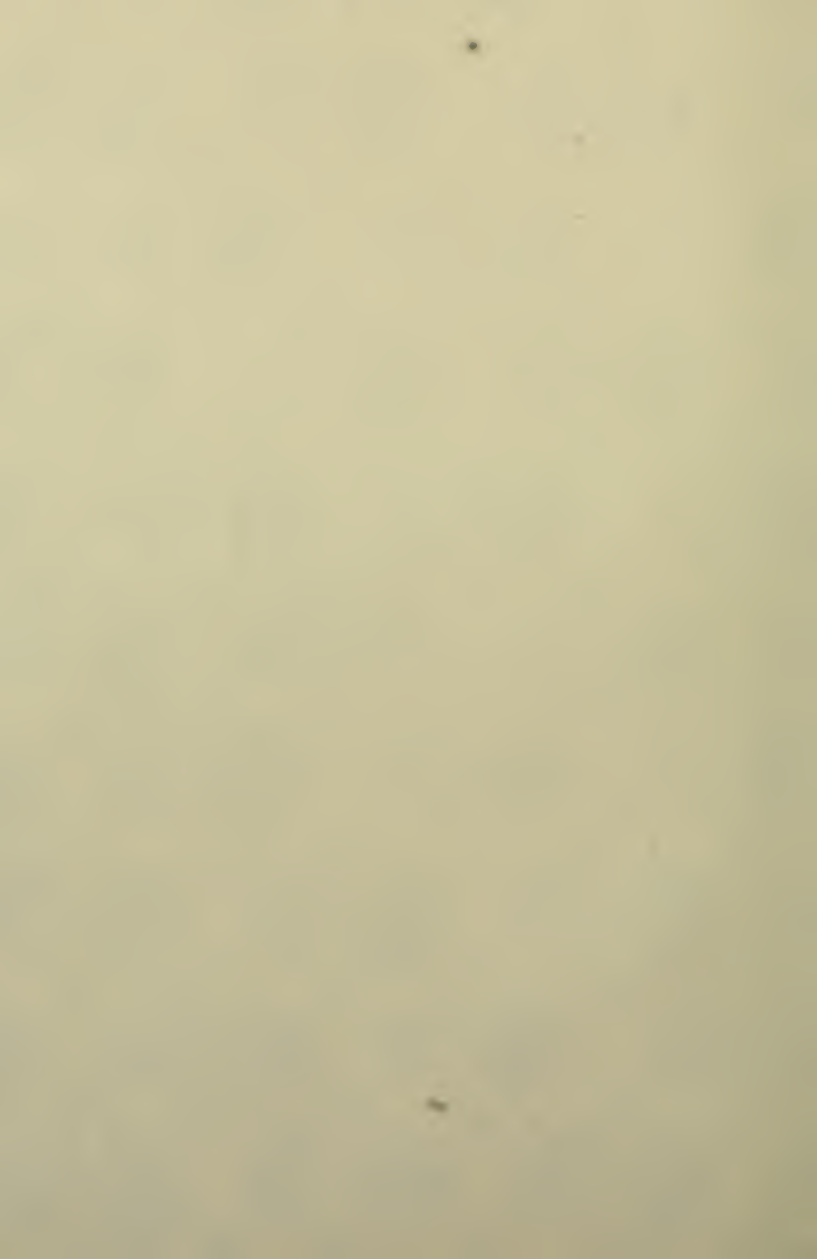


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The
**GOLDSMITH
OF NOME
AND OTHER VERSE**

met *clara*
SAM C DUNHAM

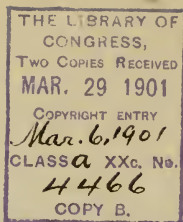
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By Samuel C. Dunham.

MAILED 21
JUN 10 1901

To the workers on the Yukon, who through the long, cold winter of national neglect have been patiently working while watching and waiting for the ice to melt.



PREFACE

These verses were written while the author was under assignment to Northern Alaska in 1897-1898 as a Statistical Expert of the Department of Labor, and in 1899-1900 as a Special Agent of the Twelfth Census. They are the free expression of some sentiments which "Official Courtesy" quite properly excluded from his formal reports to the Commissioner of Labor and the Director of the Census. Most of them have appeared in various newspapers—*The New York Sun*, *The San Francisco Examiner*, *The Washington Post*, *The Illustrated London News*, and others. They are presented as an appeal from the tax-burdened and unrepresented people of Alaska to the Government at Washington for relief from the wrongs which they have borne too patiently for twenty years.

In 1900 Alaska paid into the Treasury of the United States revenues averaging \$1,207.43 for every day in the year. For what?

SAM C. DUNHAM.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 1, 1901.



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THE MEN WHO BLAZE THE TRAIL

Let others sing of those who've won
Full hoard of virgin gold!
I strike the lyre for those who've none,
But yet are strong and bold,—
Who've blazed the trails through a pathless waste
And on the world's new chart have traced
The lines which lead where the treasure's placed,
And all their secrets told.

They search the streams and hillsides rend,
The hidden truth to learn;
They trudge where land and sky-line blend,
And gaze till eyeballs burn;
They scale bleak heights whence vast plains sweep,
And sow for those who come to reap,
While wives and sweethearts in homeland weep
And pray for their return.

Afar in regions of night-gloomed day
 Their slender shadows leap;
O'er snow-crowned peaks they fight their way
 To where the Gold-gods sleep;
Where the congelations of the ages lie,
And athwart the dome of the midnight sky
Aurora's moon-drenched splendors fly,
 Onward their footsteps creep.

Out where Deathland, reft of bush or tree,
 Spreads like a sun-browned lawn;
To the verge of the rigid, ice-locked sea,
 Where twilight greets the dawn;
Where a sheenless moon sails the sunlit night,
Where inert and dim bides the Mystic Light,
And the white swan ends his vernal flight,
 They still are pressing on.

So while others sing of the chosen few
 Who o'er the Fates prevail,
I will sing of the many, staunch and true,
 Whose brave hearts never quail,—
Who with dauntless spirit of pioneers
A state are building for the coming years,
Their sole reward their loved ones' tears,—
 The men who blaze the trail!

CIRCLE CITY, Jan. 1, 1898.

COMRADES OF THE KLONDIKE

I.

Have you, too, banged at the Chilkoot,
That storm-locked gate to the golden door?
Those thunder-built steeps have words built to suit,
And whether you prayed or whether you swore,
'Twere one, where it seemed that an oath were a
prayer,—
Seemed that God couldn't care,
Seemed that God wasn't there!

II

Have you, too, climbed to the Klondike?
Hast talked as a friend to the five-horned stars?
With muckluc shoon and with talspike
Hast bared gray head to the golden bars,
Those heaven-built bars where Morning is born?
Hast drunk with Maiden Morn
From Klondike's golden horn?

III

Hast read, low-voiced, by the Northlights
Such sermons as never men say?
Hast sat and sat with the Midnights,
That sit and that sit all day?
Hast heard the iceberg's boom on boom?
Hast heard the silence, the room?
The glory of God, the gloom?

IV

Then come to my sunland, my soldier,—
Aye, come to my heart, and to stay!
For better crusader or bolder
Bared never his breast to the fray,
And whether you prayed or you cursed,
You dared the best—and the worst—
That ever brave man durst.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

CIRCLE CITY, Oct. 19, 1897.

A REPLY

I

I, too, have banged at the Chilkoot;
I have scaled her storm-torn height
And slid down her trail with dizzy shoot
That produced a Northern Light;
And I uttered a curse-laden prayer,—
Of course God didn't care,
For only the Devil was there.

II

I, too, have climbed to the Klondike,
Through bog and muck and roots,
Till my legs were as stiff as thy talspike
And the water filled both of my boots;
Have drunk from golden horn
With maidens, night to morn,—
I acknowledge the corn.

III

Have heard, loud-voiced, by the Northlights
Such oaths as only men say;
Have lain awake through the midnights
And fought mosquitoes all day;
Cursed Klondike's—not the iceberg's—boom,
And paid an ounce for a room,
Which filled my soul with gloom.

IV

My friend, I'll come to thy sunland
As soon as this long winter's o'er,
And I'll drink to thy health in the one land
Whither thy thoughts ever soar;
And though this drought be the worst
That ever humanity cursed,
At last we'll banish our thirst.

CIRCLE CITY, Oct. 21, 1897.

WHY THE DEVIL NEVER VISITS THE YUKON

The Devil one day, so the sagas say,
Taking his Christmas vacation,
On outstretched pinions sailed this way,
In search of souls for damnation.

With malice prepense, the cold was intense
(It always is in this section),
And our unclad friend, in his innocence,
Came without proper protection.

(There are others, I'm told, who, equally bold,
Come here from a warmer climate,
To find that they're a soft snap for the cold,
Just like hell's thin-blooded primate).

In the pathless wood a lone wigwam stood,
Not far from the ice-bound river,
And in hope of finding there warmth and food,
Nick shook the flap with a shiver.

No strangers to sin, they quick took him in,
 And he stood with back to the fire
While the host prepared a big moose-skin
 And "night-cap" on which to retire.

He cursed the weather, and asked them whether
 There was any hope for a change;
He switched his tail like a thong of leather
 And said that its fork felt strange.

A maiden half-fair, with raven-black hair
 And a beautiful bear-tooth brooch,
Handed our friend, without offering a chair,
 A cup of the stuff they call "hootch."

Now I wasn't there, but the sagas declare
 The draught he quaffed was a rank one,—
A fact to which it is needless to swear
 Before a man who has drank one.

Our cold friend from hell gave a fiendish yell,
 And soon all his limbs were jerkin',
And flat on the ground convulsive he fell,
 For the hootch had got its work in.

* * * * * * *

He opened his eyes, now looking crosswise,
And asked who it was that slugged him,
And opened them wider, in wild surprise,
When he learned they had only drugged him.

When able to walk and freely to talk,
He asked them what was in it,
And the chief concoctor, without a balk,
Told him in less than a minute:

"With most cunning skill we concoct the swill
Of sugar, sour dough and berries,
And sell it to white men by quart or gill
In spite of the missionaries.

"But while it is bad, I am very glad
To say that high-wines are worse;
The white chiefs import them, which makes us sad
And puts a big kink in our purse.

"That unrectified sin the whites smuggle in
Will kill if you don't dilute it,—
A thing which *they* do, large profits to win;
No one will dare to dispute it."

As pale as grim Death and with quickened breath,
 Old Nick gasped, "I'll hie me southward,
And prone on the sulphurous marge of Lethe,
 I'll dash its sweet waters mouthward.

"That infernal stuff is quite strong enough
 To run a small hell without me;
I firmly believe I'll carry its rough
 Effects for a year about me."

He then climbed the sky, and with curdling cry
 Soared off through the azure, sinwards,
In the well-stocked sideboards of hell to try
 To find something to soothe his inwards.

And up to this day, so the sagas say,
 The Devil flies shy of this region,
Contented, aye! glad, to resign his sway
 To Hootch and his High-wine Legion.

CIRCLE CITY, Jan. 8, 1898.

ARCTIC LIGHTNING

Far out where the sullen darkness
Palls the silent, ice-chained sea,
Spring, low-arched, the fragile Northlights
O'er the realm of mystery;
From their haunts beneath the crescent,
Where the murky shadows lie,
Come Aurora's pale magicians,
With their festoons for the sky,
And while the Color Sergeant musters
His Immortal Seven
To hang their banners from the dome
And drape the walls of heaven,
Straight he hurls his shafts of silver
High up in the star-gemmed blue,
Where the wraiths of light, soft-tinted
And of swiftly-changing hue,
Through the long and ghostly vigils
Of the voiceless Arctic night
Weirdly gleam and faintly whisper
As they tremble out of sight.

CIRCLE CITY, Feb. 22, 1898.

JUST BACK FROM DAWSON

I've just got back from Dawson, where the Arctic
rainbow ends,
An' the swiftly-rushin' Klondike with the mighty
Yukon blends;
Where the sun on Christmas mornin' in the act of
risin' sets,
So that just a minit's sunshine is all that region
gets;
An' the rimplin' midnight glories through the moon-
tranced heavens fly,
While the guileless sour-dough miners set around
the stove and lie
'Bout the good old times at Circle, 'fore the smooth
promoters came
An' set the country boomin' in a way that is a
shame.

I've just got back from Dawson, where the large mos-
quitoes sing,
An' soon as they forsake the camp, their small suc-
cessors sting;
Where 'long about the last of June the sun again
surprises
The new-arrived inhabitants, an' while it's settin'
rises;
Where the price of pay-streak bacon is two dollars
for a pound,
An' to treat your friends at Spencer's costs an ounce
or two a round,
An' they sell Seattle cider, in the guise of dry cham-
pagne,
Which institoots a lingerin' drunk that's very far
from plain.

I've just returned from Dawson, where the charge
for anteek eggs
Makes considerable difference in length of buyers'
legs;
Where our helpful friends in Washington, misled by
bad advice,
Concluded they could operate steam engines on the
ice,
An' are tryin' now the reindeer, a-feedin' them on
moss,
But wherever they've been tried so far there's been
a heavy loss,

While all the old trail-breakers to their pet traditions
cling
An' still maintain with vehemence—"the dog's the
proper thing."

I've just reached here from Dawson, where I seen
Frank Slavin spar,
An' also seen his victim a-revivin' at the bar
While Frank shook hands with all his friends an'
loudly did declare
That he could lick Fitzsimmons, too, if he was only
there;
An' seen Oklahoma Wilson attempt to instigate
A coop de Colt, but ere his gun became articulate
They yanked him to the barracks in a way he won't
forget,
An' to cultivate his harmlessness they're boardin'
him there yet.

I've just come out from Dawson, where everybody's
health
Is bein' undermined an' ruined in a wild-eyed rush
for wealth,
An' a score or so of schemers, on evil projects bent,
Are robbin' the community to a terrible extent;
Where the men who dig the treasure are strong an'
brave an' bold,

Wrenchin' from the glacier's bowels stockin's full
of yellow gold,
While the transportation pirates slyly syndicate their
gall
With the criminal intention of absorbin' of it all.

I've just escaped from Dawson, where the ice grows
ten feet thick,
An' doods who like their baths served cold don't take
'em in a crick;
Where no one, be he rich or poor, is ever dubbed a
"hero"
Till he has done his hundred miles at 60 less than
zero;
Where men chop water out in chunks an' pile it on
the banks,
An' make their hot-air heaters out of empty coal-oil
tanks,
An' read back-number papers by the unobtrusive rays
Of tallow-dips an' davy lamps—dim lights of other
days.

I've just emerged from Dawson, a bad financial
wreck,
For instead of gettin' dust galore, I got it in the
neck,
Where Adam got the apple in that episode with
Eve,

Which led to woe an' stern decree that they would
 have to leave,
Like thirty thousand other jays, by golden visions
 lured,
Who climbed the trails, through hardships to which
 they weren't inured,
To find that them Dominion knaves, by dastardly
 deceits,
Had concessioned everything in sight an' even leased
 the streets.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 25, 1898.

SENCE I COME BACK FROM DAWSON

Sence I come back from Dawson to these old familiar scenes,
I've read the yaller journals an' the 10-cent magazines,
An' to sort o' classify events an' find out what occurred
While I was hibernatin' where the light of God was blurred,
I've been searchin' through the columns of the daily picture-press,
To see if I could ascertain, or formulate a guess,
Why the scribblers who last autumn so artistically lied
'Bout the riches of the Klondike concluded to subside.

Then every trail was occupied by journalistic beats
Who represented (with slim cards) all saffron-tinted
sheets

From Seattle to Savannah an' from Bangor to Du-
luth,

But nary one of them was there to represent the
truth.

They stumbled up the Chilkoot an' they loafed along
the lakes,

An' when not a-photographin' things or writin' up
their fakes,

Imbided raw rum from Hudson Bay, an' dressed in
goffin' suits,

Stood 'round an' told old-timers 'bout the shortest
Klondike roots.

Now I've gathered from my readin' that the reason
why they quit

Writin' lies about the Klondike was, as lawyers say,
to-wit:

Havin' placed us in cold storage an' done all the
harm they could,

They felt a awful cravin' for a brand of booze that's
good,

An' left at once to sponge it, an' unable to refrain
From causin' people trouble, they arranged a war
with Spain,

An' to properly conduct the same, rushed bravely to
the front
An' led all the gallant charges an' bore the battle's
brunt.

Now, while us Klondike refugees most greevously de-
plore
The mournful fact so few of them passed to the other
shore,
Our grief is curtailed by the thought which punctu-
ates our sobs,
That some of them who were not killed have lately
lost their jobs.
An' sence my feelin's is aroused, some words I've got
to say
About the highly lucrative an' lowly sinful way
The experts an' perfessers told the things they didn't
know
(A-settin' in warm rooms at home) about the realm
of snow.

Of all their stories I have read, the worst about that
far land
Was written by a man whose brow has long worn
Fiction's garland,
Who in the "Klondike Number" of a well-known mag-
azine
Told of the sylvan beauties of some trails he'd never
seen,

With purlin' brooks an' wild delights an' picnics
everywhere

(Things that exist in poets' dreams, but don't exist
up there);

Then followed in the steps of them he'd so cruelly
misled,

To write about the scenery an' enumerate the dead.

Perhaps 't will seem that I've assumed a gay an' flip-
pant air,

But while I'm settin' here to-night a ghost stands by
my chair.

Again I see a famished form stretched 'neath a som-
bre sky;

Again I fold the shriveled hands an' close the death-
glazed eye;

I see the horrors Falsehood wrought, an' hear again
the wail

Of its victim as he perished on a panoramic trail,
Where his bleached an' badly-scattered bones is all
that's left to tell

How he battled with the terrors of a thousand miles
of hell.

Now, as I ain't no statesman; I can't figger what
we'll gain

Through this unexpected legacy of trouble from old
Spain;

But as a unkissed hero from the barren Yukon Flats,
I modestly petition our distinguished diplomats:
In your God-directed efforts to emancipate mankind,
Don't forget your helpless brothers in your Arctic
 wilds confined,
But in your swoop for liberty, to right an' justice
 true,
Extend a helpin' hand to them,—annex Alaska, too.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 1, 1899.

I'M GOIN' BACK TO DAWSON

I'm goin' back to Dawson, an' suppose I must explain

How I generated nerve enough to hit that trail again.
I've tramped this land from east to west an' tried it
north an' south,

An' found the people short on heart but very long on
mouth;

I've wandered through the byways an' I've mingled
with the crowds,

An' felt a dam sight lonesomer than when above the
clouds

I stood alone 'mid ghostly isles that pierced a spectral sea

An' cried in vain to far-off stars that couldn't answer
me.

I met a great philanthropist, whose wealth they say
was ground
From the labor of a thousand serfs,—whose fame's
a-spreadin' round
Because he built a edifice an' filled it full of books
To learn the poor submission to incorporated crooks,
An' seen him stop a barefoot kid with papers in the
street
An' hand to him a nickel for a flamin' one-cent sheet,
Then sneak behind him for a block, a-keepin' him in
range,
To nab the limpin' little cuss if he tried to swipe the
change.

An' I rambled through the alleys of a big department store,
Admirin' of the handsome gents which walk along
the floor
A-tellin' ladies where to go to get the cheapest
things,—
Where "Cash!" appears to be the song that everybody sings,
An' somethin' like five hundred girls that ought to
be at school
Lean wearily against the shelves because there's nary
a stool,—
An' I'm told the chap who owns the claim has the
immortal nerve
To pay but half a case a day to them that stand an'
serve.

I'm also told that this here man exists in princely
style
In marble halls set on a hill that slopes away a
mile,
An' to stupefy his conscience he's donated from his
wad
Some money to the heathens an' has built a house
for God;
An' drowsin' in his temple on a recent Sabbath
morn,
I seen again the faces of them girls so pale an' lorn,
An' wondered if the cuss was bankin' on the heath-
ens he had saved
For a discount up in heaven 'gainst the white folks
he'd enslaved.

Then I roused up from my dreamin' that the organ
had produced
An' thought about the Yukon boys I've so shame-
fully traduced,
An' seen again quite clearly, in no music-painted
dream,
Two snow-blind men a-stumblin' 'hind a limpin'
Siwash team,—
Old Cooley an' his pardner Jo, who never go to
church,
A-strugglin' back to Circle from their long trip out
on Birch

To feed the starvin' Tananas,—a service so high-
priced

They'll not collect their wages till they hand their
time to Christ.

In trampin' through this high-toned land I'm pain-
fully surprised

To learn that butchers so refined an' highly civilized
That they'd disdain to occupy a mansion built of
logs

Provide our soldiers beef an' things I wouldn't feed
my dogs;

Which makes me want to get back where the canned
goods ain't so bad

An' the girls you meet on every hand ain't pale-
faced, thin, an' sad,—

Where the milk of human kindness ain't so rigidly
congealed

That we'd let 'em wander from the trail because
they wasn't heeled.

I want to hear the soothin' tones of Bates's old
guitar

As he sings about "The Fisher Maiden" at "The Po-
lar Star,"

An' see Brick Wheaton rassle with his yaller mando-
lin

As he chants the charms of Injun hootch an' other
kinds of sin;

I want to hear them songs once more an' want to
see my friends

Where the swiftly-rushin' Klondike with the mighty
Yukon blends,

An' they size a feller-sinner by his heart an' what
he knows

An' never ask his Southern name or criticise his
clo's.

I want to see Aurora—not the one that greets the
day,

But her weak an' pallid namesake—try to drive the
night away,

An' watch her throw her shafts of silver far up in
the sky,

While her color-bearers tint 'em with an ever-
chargin' dye,

An' from the walls of heaven all their fragile ban-
ners swing

Till the air's alive with whispers like the swishin' of
a wing,

An' from the zenith flash great lights across the in-
terspace

Till you feel you're in God's presence an' can almost
see His face.

So I'm goin' back to Dawson, an' I'll float along that
way

As the ice moves down the river, 'long about the last
of May,

When birds an' flowers are flirtin' an' the white
clouds sail the blue—

An' the energetic insecs get in their fine work too.
I know now what I didn't when I went up there be-
fore,

That it is soshul suicide to linger round here poor,
For though the Arctic winters there are long an'
dark an' cold,

They're warmer than my welcome when they found I
brought no gold.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 22, 1899.

TO JOAQUIN MILLER

Here at the Gate of the Arctic,
Facing the silent land,
Backward I reach through the distance
And grasp your heart-hot hand.
If our earthly trails ne'er cross again,
I'll meet you farther west,
On the sunset side of the Sundown Sea,
Where trail-worn poets rest.

CHILKOOT PASS, June 19, 1899.

ALASKA TO UNCLE SAM

Sitting on my greatest glacier,
With my feet in Bering Sea,
I am thinking, cold and lonely,
Of the way you've treated me.
Three-and-thirty years of silence!
Through ten thousand sleepless nights
I've been praying for your coming—
For the dawn of civil rights.

When you took me, young and trusting,
From the growling Russian bear,
Loud you swore before the nations
I should have the Eagle's care.
Never yet has wing of eagle
Cast a shadow on my peaks,
But I've watched the flight of buzzards
And I've felt their busy beaks.

Your imported cross-roads statesmen
 (What a motley, sordid train!)
Come with laws conceived in closets,—
 Made for loot and private gain!
These the best that you can furnish?
 Then God help the heathen folk
You have rescued from the burden
 Of the rotting Spanish yoke!

I'm a full-grown, proud-souled woman,
 And I'm getting tired and sick—
Wearing all the cast-off garments
 Of your body politic.
If you'll give me your permission,
 I will make some wholesome laws
That will suit my hard conditions
 And promote your country's cause.

By the latest mail you sent me
 (Nearly all your mails are late!),
Comes the news that you've gone roving
 In your proud old Ship of State,—
Dreaming with a sunburnt siren
 By the sultry southern seas,
Where the songs of your enchantress
 Swoon upon the scented breeze.

You are blind with lust of conquest
And desire for foreign trade,
Or you'd see the half-drawn dagger,
With its brightly-burnished blade,
Sticking in the loosened girdle
Of the black brute by your side—
If you treat her as I'm treated
She will stick it through your hide.

Curb your taste for sun-killed countries,
Where the natives loaf and shirk;
Come to richer northern regions,
Where the people think and work.
If you want a part of Asia
When the Chinamen are killed,
Run a railroad up to Bering—
I will show you where to build.

Come next spring and count my treasures,
And don't stop at Glacier Bay,
Like the many high commissions
You have started up this way.
You will see my wooded 'mountains,
With their citadels of snow
Gleaming in the purple distance
Through the pearl-hued alpen-glow.

Standing on my flower-strewn hillsides,
Where my mighty rivers meet,
Gazing o'er my verdant valleys,
Spreading seaward from your feet,
You will see the sunlit splendors
Of my moonless midnight skies,
Gilded with the light supernal
Shining straight from Paradise.

If you stay till Hoary Winter
Has entombed the silent land,
You will read celestial sermons,
Written by the Master's hand
On the azure walls of heaven,
Where Aurora's tinted light
Weirdly flits like summer lightning
All the ghostly Arctic night.

When you come I'll show you wonders
That will cause you great surprise,
And if gold is what you're seeking
You will open wide your eyes.
Drive away your Wall street schemers,
With their coupons and their nerve,—
Then while you extend your commerce
I'll expand your gold reserve.

You will find a magic city
On the shore of Bering Strait
Which shall be for you a station
To unload your Arctic freight,
Where the gold of Humboldt's vision
Has for countless ages lain,
Waiting for the hand of labor
And the Saxon's tireless brain.

You shall have a cool vacation,
Hunting for the great white bear,
And you'll soon forget Manila
And the trouble you've had there;
For as in the morn of nations
Every highway led to Rome,
You and all your restless rivals
Will be sailing straight to Nome.

You will wake a sleeping empire,
Stretching southward from the Pole
To the headlands where the waters
Of your western ocean roll.
Then will rise a mighty people
From the travail of the years,
Whom with pride you'll call your children,—
Offspring of my pioneers.

FORT YUKON, Sept. 6, 1890.

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY MY FORTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

When a man gets along to about forty-two,
He's apt to sit down and let pass in review
The scenes of his past, and he's likely to make
An effort to spot the fatal mistake
Which changed the whole course of human events
With regard to his hopes and honest intents.

One makes his mistake in the morning of life,
In failing to choose or in choosing a wife;
Another takes a drink and the evil is done,
And Dishonor completes what the Devil begun,
While many evade Life's pitfalls and snares
Till Old Time has garnered or silvered their hairs.

But mine was the earliest failure on earth,
For I made my mistake at the hour of birth
By making my debut, an undressed kid,
The same day of the month that Washington did,
And I look back now and see quite plain
Why all of my efforts have been in vain.

You've heard about George and his cute little ax
And his weakness for sticking too close to the facts.
My very first effort to emulate him
Gave a shock to my system that made my head swim,
For when I confessed to my volatile dad
I got the worst licking I ever have had.

In spite of that set-back I've kept up the fight
'Gainst Error and Falsehood, for Truth and the
Right;

But always through life I've felt the restraint
Of the gift handed down by my Natal-day Saint,
And I'm forced to admit that Virtue's reward
Is the only return I can thus far record.

No matter what pathway I've chosen in life,
In city or country or political strife,
On the crest of a mountain or the marge of a lake,
There stood close beside me my fatal mistake,
And wherever my lofty ambition has led
I've seen my hopes wither, my projects drop dead.

But here in the Arctic, where Falsehood is tough,
The pathway of Truth is peculiarly rough,
And as I gaze out o'er the white frozen sea
I feel all too keenly it's no place for me,
For no one who sticks to George W.'s creed
Can ever expect in this land to succeed.

ST. MICHAEL, Feb. 22, 1900.

THE LAMENT OF THE OLD SOUR DOUGH

I've trudged and I've starved and I've frozen
All over this white barren land,—
Where the sea stretches straight, white and silent,
Where the timberless white mountains stand,—
From the white peaks that gleam in the moonlight,
Like a garment that graces a soul,
To the last white sweep of the prairies,
Where the black shadows brood round the Pole.

(Now, pray don't presume from this prelude
That a flame of poetical fire
Is to burst from my brain like a beacon,
For I've only been tuning my lyre
To the low, sad voice of a singer
Who's inspired to sing you some facts
About the improvements in staking
And the men who mine with an ax.)

I've panned from Peru to Point Barrow,
But I never located a claim
Till I'd fully persuaded my conscience
That pay dirt pervaded the same;
And this is the source of my sorrow,
As you will be forced to agree
When you learn how relentless Misfortune
Has dumped all her tailings on me.

I worked with my pardner all summer,
Cross-cutting a cussed cold creek,
Which we never once thought of locating
Unless we located the streak;
And when at the close of the season
We discovered the creek was a fake
We also discovered the region
Had nothing left in it to stake.

We traversed the toe-twisting tundra,
Where reindeer root round for their feed,
And the hungry Laplanders who herd them
Devour them before they can breed.
Here it seemed that good claims might be plenty,
And we thought we would stake one—perhaps;
But we found to our grief that the gulches
Were staked in the name of the Lapps.

A hundred long leagues to the northward,
O'er the untrodden, sun-burnished snow,
We struggled, half blind and half famished,
To the sea where the staunch whalers go.
We found there broad beaches of ruby
And mountains with placers and leads,
But all save the sky was pre-empted
By salt-water sailors and Swedes.

Then we climbed the cold creeks near a mission
That is run by the agents of God,
Who trade Bibles and prayer-books to heathen
For ivory, sealskins and cod.
At last we were sure we had struck it,
But alas! for our hope of reward,—
The landscape from sea-beach to sky-line
Was staked in the name of the Lord!

We're too slow for the new breed of miners,
Embracing all classes of men,
Who locate by power of attorney
And prospect their claims with a pen,—
Who do all of their fine work through agents
And loaf around town with the sports,
On intimate terms with the lawyers,
On similar terms with the courts.

We're scared to submission and silence
By the men the Government sends
To force us to keep law and order,
While they keep claims for their friends,
And collect in an indirect manner
An exceedingly burdensome tax,
Assumed for a time by the traders
And then transferred to our backs. .

We had some hard knocks on the Klondike
From the Cub-lion's unpadded paws,
And suffered some shocks from high license
And other immutable laws;
But they robbed us by regular schedule,
So we knew just what to expect,
While at Nome we're scheduled to struggle
Until we're financially wrecked.

I'm sick of the scream of the Eagle
And laws of dishonest design,
And I'm going in quest of a country
Where a miner can locate a mine;
So when I have rustled an outfit
These places will know me no more,
For I'll try my luck with the Russians
On the bleak Siberian shore.

NOME, April 15, 1900.

THE GOLDSMITH OF NOME

I

I am resting by my anvil,
And my forge is growing cold;
I have ceased my age-long labors,
I have beaten out my gold;
I have scattered wide my treasures
On the superficial sands,
Where they lie unlocked and waiting
For the work of human hands.

Where my far-spread barren beaches
Lay untrod through countless years,
I can see the meager camp-fires
Of the hardy pioneers
Who have learned anew my secret
From the unsecretive sands,
And have sent my golden message
To the workers in all lands.

Gazing southward through the valleys
Where the ice-chained rivers sleep
'Neath their wide-flung ghostly mantles
And the Arctic nightwinds sweep,
I see men of dauntless spirit,—
Men whose brave hearts never quail,—
Struggling northward o'er wild barrens,
Breaking for the world a trail.

Looking out across the waters
Stretching sunward to the Sound,
I can see the sons of labor
Boarding vessels hitherbound;
I can hear the great crowds cheering
On the fast-receding piers,
Where sad mothers clasp their children
And gaze seaward through their tears.

I can see my people coming,
Sailing over many seas;
I can see the white sails swelling
As they catch the southern breeze;
I can see the black smoke trailing
From the sloping steamer-stacks,
Throwing swiftly-circling shadows
Over foamy, swirling tracks.

From the swarming, stifling cities,
 Where wan children gasp for breath;
From the shadeless, unploughed prairies,
 Where grim cyclones scatter death;
From the old world's worked-out placer
 And the rock-choked mountain gorge,
They are coming by the thousands
 For the product of my forge.

II

Here I wrought throughout the ages,
 By the silent, tideless sea,
Beating out my golden ingots
 For the empire yet to be,—
Watched the mighty strife of Nature,
 Heard the glacial millstones grind,
Marked the rise and fall of nations,
 Timed the progress of mankind.

While the seven-hued Arctic lightning
 Faintly flashes through the night,
Tinting all the ghostly landscape
 With its soft, elusive light,
I am dreaming of the glory
 Of the prehistoric race
Which inhabited these valleys
 When the first stampede took place.

When I entered on my labors
 Stately palmtrees weirdly threw
Slender shadows in the moonlight,
 Where the sea slept warm and blue;
In the dark primeval forest,
 Dank beneath a tropic sun,
Roamed wild beasts of form colossal,
 Greater than the mastodon.

Birds of brilliant sun-lit plumage
 Caroled in the fronded trees,
And their songs were wafted seaward
 On the balmy summer breeze;
Fragrant flowers exhaled their odors,
 And the distant hazy hills
Lulled the fruitful vales and uplands
 With the music of their rills.

From the plain swept wooded mountains
 So immeasurably high
That their gleaming, snowy summits
 Pierced the opalescent sky,
While the sun sent shafts of amber
 To adorn their clinging clouds,
And the moon as came the night-tide
 Veiled their forms in silver shrouds.

Women framed in perfect beauty,
 Greatest gift that God had given,
Reared to manhood happy children,
 Taught them truth derived from heaven;
Men of elemental wisdom,
 Giants of that elder time,
Made the land an earthly Eden,
 Free from poverty and crime.

III

From beyond the distant mountains,
 Where the day pursues the dawn,
Came strange men of pallid visage,
 Active brain and feeble brawn,
Who brought all their wiles and vices,
 Leaving truth and virtue home,
And at once took up the burden
 Of good government for Nome.

They brought all the arts and customs
 Of the countries whence they came,
All their culture and refinement,
 All their wickedness and shame,
And they taught my simple people
 All their subtlety of mind
And the luxury of living
 On the labor of their kind.

They unearthed my hidden treasures,
Filled their coffers full of gold,
Trafficked in the market places
Where their fellowmen were sold,
Made of woman's soul and virtue
The cheap plaything of an hour,
Gave the rights of man to Mammon,
Bought their way to place and power.

When God saw the selfish uses
To which men had put His gold,
Black His brow became with anger
And His heart grew stern and cold,
And He hurled His bolts of thunder
From the battlements of heaven
Till the sun went out in darkness
And remotest space was riven.

Then came on that awful travail
Which made Mother Nature groan,
Shook the stars from out the heavens,
Threw the Devil from his throne,
Swung the planets from their orbits
Till they aimless swept and whirled,
Turned the Tropics to the Arctics,
And repolarized the world.

Through the frigid, age-long winter
Here in loneliness I dwelt
In my breezy glacial cavern,
Waiting for the ice to melt,
Till at last I caught a vision,
Through the sun-transfigured rime,
Of my vales once more aslumber
'Neath the haze of summertime.

IV

Then I watched that wondrous waking,
Nineteen hundred years ago,
When the great searchlights of Heaven
Set the universe aglow,
Throwing rays of hope and comfort
Through the darkness of despair
Hanging o'er the heavy laden
And the weary everywhere.

All night long the earth lay sleeping
'Neath a pale, mysterious light
Beaming from the throne of Heaven,
Where God's lamps were burning bright;
Choirs seraphic made sweet music,
Faintly heard through gates ajar;—
In the East above the morning
Shone a new irradiant Star.

Jesus came and taught His lessons,
Walked the earth a little space,
Lighted all the ways of sorrow
With the glory of His face,
Planted hope in hopeless bosoms
As he went from door to door,
Wept and fainted by the wayside
'Neath the burdens of the poor.

He rebuked the righteous rascals
Who stood in the street to pray,
Scourged the brokers from God's temple,
Drove the hypocrites away,
Lifted up forsaken women,
Cheered the lonely and distressed,
Folded hungry little children
Gently to His loving breast.

Then the money-changers dragged Him
Like a drunkard through the street,
Thrust sharp thorns in His pale forehead,
Pierced with nails His bleeding feet,
Stretched Him on the tree of torture,
And His quivering muscles tore,
As upon the cross of labor
They now crucify the poor.

As His Spirit sped to Heaven,
Clothed in raiment white as snow,
From afar I heard His promise
To all workers here below:
"Watch and labor in my vineyard,
Bear the burden and the pain;
I am going to my Father,
But I'll come to you again."

V

Then a great awaking pity
Seized upon my swelling breast,
And my heart was filled with yearning
For the wretched and oppressed;
As a father loves to labor
For the children of his bone,
I have wrought here for my people,
In the silence and alone.

I have watched them sadly toiling
Through the centuries as slaves,
Never laying down their burdens
Till they dropped them at their graves,
And while watching I've been working
For the workers in all lands,
For the millions born to labor,
Their sole heritage their hands.

Not as wrought the other Goldsmiths,
 Jealous of their hoarded wealth,
Who in darkness through the ages
 Wrought in secret, and by stealth
Hid it in the heart of mountains
 From the primal stratum hurled,
Or beneath the slag and cinders
 In the basement of the world.

They wrought for the thrifty masters,
 For the men of fertile brain,
Who grow rich through toil of others,
 Thriving on their brothers' pain,—
Who by traffic with earth's rulers
 Gain control of Nature's sod,
Arrogating as their birthright
 A co-partnership with God.

* * * * *

Come and take my golden treasures
 From the shining, yielding sands;
They shall be the untithed wages
 Of your free, unfettered hands.
If the men who prey on labor
 Try to grasp the gold you glean,
I will call the guardian nation,
 And she'll scourge them from the scene.

For the self-selected savior
Of the islands of the sea
Will not idly stand and witness
Such a blow to liberty;
She that 'round the lazy heathen
Her protecting arms has thrown
Will not let her working children
Be defrauded of their own.

NOME, April 1, 1900.

SINCE THE JUDGE LEFT HERE FOR NOME

Like one just waking from a dream, I walked abroad
to-day
And rambled to the green-roofed town that sleeps
across the bay; ·
I wandered to the empty house, where I was wont to
go
And always found a welcome and a solace for my
woe,—
Where erstwhile on cold winter nights (so long and
yet so short!)
We boys from all the island round did frequently
resort
To celebrate the passing hours by playing cards and
pool,
While our kind host walked back and forth and with
his famous tool
Extracted corks and filled us up on beer and wine
and stuff
Till each had sworn repeatedly that he was full
enough.

I stood despondent at the door and faced the frozen
foam

That from my frail and faltering feet reached west-
ward to Cape Nome,

And as I gazed with brimming eyes across the shin-
ing sea,

Some sober thoughts and sentiments were blown
ashore to me.

I pictured in my burning brain the Judge upon the
trail,

Entombed within a native shack or struck by Arctic
gale,

And then that old, old question came and bothered
me again:

"Are those who go or those who stay the sport of
greatest pain?"

And as I rubbed my throbbing brow, my aching heart
repined:

"The ones who suffer most of all are those who stay
behind!"

I'm sure as westward speeds the Judge he little ap-
prehends

The frightful havoc he has wrought among his for-
mer friends;

If he could hear them sigh and groan and see them
try to walk,

I'm sure he never would again produce his private
stock
Of Runnymede and Pommery's and Mumm's seduc-
tive secs
And pour the same persistently down their receptive
necks.
(The thing that seems most strange to me and fills
me with surprise
Is how the Judge's private stock affects a fellow's
eyes,—
Last night before he went away the town was painted
red,
But now it wears a ghastly green like grave-grass o'er
the dead.)

* * * * *

I wandered through the hatless hall and passed from
room to room,
Last night alive with mirth and light, to-day adead
with gloom.
I went into the parlor, where we used to sit around
And suffer till the Judge his punch did perfectly com-
pound.
The bookcase stood with vacant shelves and doors ex-
tended wide,
As if it yearned for vanished friends that once re-
posed inside;

Some flowering plants, left there abloom with blossoms chaste and rare,
Already drooped their slender stems for want of woman's care,—
The sight of these familiar things intensified my grief
So that I sadly turned away and sought outside relief.

I blundered with uncertain steps into a closet dark,
Where stood the shapes of spirits flown, all glassy-eyed and stark,—
A hundred bottles, all uncorked (last night with fullness rife),
Proclaiming by their emptiness the emptiness of life.
What happened then? Was it a dream? What was I looking at?
What was it that on yonder shelf so calm and proudly sat?
(It was a large cold cruse of Mumm the Judge forgot to crack,—
I cracked it with celerity, my lips began to smack,
And to my careless absent friend I drank this truthful toast:
"Of all the drinks I've drunk with you I needed this one most!")

* * * * *

The room that had appeared so dark was brilliantly
ablaze,—
The scene now shone transplendent with the light of
other days;
The place was full of brawny men and charming wo-
men too,—
The former rather numerous, the latter somewhat
few;
I heard again the happy jest, the reading of old
rhymes,
The tales of hardships long endured, the stories of
old times;
I heard once more the sweet old songs, sung with a
graceful art
That made us think of childhood's days and softened
every heart;
And then I sank into a chair and wished I was in
Nome,
And while I wished I fell asleep and dreamed a dream
of home.

ST. MICHAEL, April 25, 1900.

TO THE YUKON ORDER OF PIONEERS

In Memory of Charles S. Lavante. Died at Nome,
Sept. 8, 1900

Will you let an Arctic Brother lay a garland on the
bier

Where sleeps the stark and pallid form of a Yukon
Pioneer?

Will you let me pay a tribute to the one you mourn
to-day,

Whose soul is speeding homeward from its worked-
out dump of clay?

I spent a winter with your friend among the Yukon
hills,

And shared with him his simple joys and compli-
cated ills;

I saw him tested by the rule which few at Nome ob-
serve,

That we should do to other men what we ourselves
deserve.

He broke the rules of order and the excise ordinance
By selling untaxed liquor at the old-time Siwash
dance;
But he never broke the maxim of the mushers on the
trail,
That it's wrong to pass a comrade when you see he's
apt to fail.

I see his face a-beaming as he stood behind the bar
And listened to the soothing tones of Bates's old
guitar,
In the good old days at Circle, ere the courts and
lawyers came
To rob our richest sluices in a way that is a shame.

I hear again his gentle voice and see his sad, sweet
smile,
As he told the tales of hardship on the creeks at
Forty Mile,—
How you wintered on bad bacon and on prehistoric
beans,
And when you had the scurvy steeped the spruce
boughs for your greens.

He told me all about the trails that climbed up in the
air,
Meandered o'er the mountain peaks, and ended—God
knows where;
He told me of the hopeful times you spent at Cas-
siar,
And how you used to rock out gold on old Bonanza
Bar.

He told me how the traders used to do you boys up
brown
By putting up the prices when they said they'd put
them down,
And all about that awful year you fellows almost
died
Because you missed "The Racket" and were forced to
stay inside.

His latchstring always hung outside, and you never
had to knock,
For he had no knocker at his door, and he hadn't
any lock;
When you asked him for a porterhouse he dished up
caribou,
And when you craved a whisky straight he set up
"hootchinoo."

He never liked the Klondike, and he had no faith in
Nome,
And since he came, in '86, he got no news from
home;
But he never lost his courage, and he always used to
say
That the good old times at Forty Mile would come
again to stay.

The good old times have come to him, but not at
Forty Mile,
And ne'er again at Circle will you see his happy
smile;
For he's gone to take his well-earned rest in the uni-
versal way,
And I know he'll find God's latchstring a-hanging out
to-day.

NOME, Sept. 9, 1900.

A GREETING TO THE SWEDES

From their Fellow-sufferers at Topkuk

We learn to-day that you've received a message from
the Sound

Which loosed the legal ligatures with which your
claims were bound.

We send our warmest greetings, and hope that you
will get

The dust the Boss Receiver is a-hanging onto yet.

We had our little laughs last year, and chuckled at
your woes

Caused by the festive jumpers and the mournful old
Sour Doughs;

But we've ceased to smile and laid our laughs upon
the upper shelves,

For we have learned to our regret just how it is our-
selves.

We have a sub-receiver here, who's working out our
mine

In a systematic manner which makes our hearts re-
pine.

He brought a damned expensive plant, shipped in his
boss's name,

And planted it against our "kick" upon our richest
claim.

He brought a gang of bosom friends, helped up here
from below,

And wouldn't give a single job to any one we know,
And when he took the riffles out and weighed his
shining swag,

He wouldn't let us see the scales or even heft the bag.

We called upon the lowest court and all the powers
that be,—

We raised our mournful cries to heaven and sent
them out to sea;

We cried in vain for earthly help and almost ceased
to fight,

When Nature took a hand and gave a knock-out blow
for right.

Last week the foam-crowned Sea King came and
served his unbought writ,
And Aleck's high-priced plant now lies deep down be-
neath the spit.
God jumped our claim and drove away the horde of
unpaid hands,
Who wander up and down and weep along our
worked-out sands.

We join with you in praise to-day and raise a joyful
shout
In honor of the righteous laws that knocked the
jumpers out.
Let's celebrate in dry champagne the powers that
wield the rod,—
You thank the U. S. Circuit Court while we give
thanks to God!

ТОРКУР, Sept. 16, 1900.

THE POOR SWEDE

A square-headed, hard-working Swede,
Propelled by inordinate greed,
 Mushed around in the cold
 Till he found some coarse gold,
And then came to town at full speed.

A lawyer with galvanized jaw,
Whose mode of procedure was raw,
 Sent a thief out to jump
 The rich claim of the chump
And stake it "according to law."

The Swede is now stretched on the rack
And trying to get his claim back,
 While the Court takes its time
 To consider the crime
Till the receiver fills up his long sack.

NOME, Sept. 17, 1900.

STARVING ONCE, RECEIVING NOW

I

A lawyer was disbarred back home
And found it convenient to roam;
 He floated this way
 In a cargo of hay
And inflicted his presence on Nome.

He waited for clients to rob
Till his stomach demanded a job;
 Then he haunted the street
 For something to eat
Till he looked like a Klondike slob.

II

A miner climbed over the hills
And prospected the gulches and rills
Till he discovered enough
Of the right kind of stuff
To drive away poverty's ills.

He staked a rich claim in his name
And proceeded to ground-sluice the same;
Then he came in and bragged
Of the gold he had bagged,—
That's why he's not working his claim.

III

The case was decided next day
In the usual ex parte way,
And the miner then found
He was robbed of his ground
And couldn't get even a lay.

The lawyer now has ample means
And frequents the most brilliant scenes;
He eats three times a day
At the Paree Caffay,
While the miner eats bacon and beans.

NOME, Sept. 18, 1900.

HOMeward BOUND

I am out upon the ocean,
 Sailing southward to the Sound
With six hundred busted brothers,
 Kicking hard, but homeward bound.
There are sixty in the staterooms
 And some eighty souls or so
Sleeping on the floors and tables,
 While the rest seek sleep below.

Of the sixty in the cabin
 Only thirty had the stuff,
While the others came on passes
 Or some other sort of bluff.
How the hundreds in the steerage
 Got the gold to get them home
Always will remain the greatest
 Of the mysteries of Nome.

There's a siren from Seattle
Who is traveling in style,
Basking in the brilliant sunshine
Of the purser's dazzling smile.
She has jumped a first-class stateroom
That is simply out of sight,
And has oranges and apples
With her champagne every night.

There's a widow with two children
Who is trying to get home,
Having given up the struggle
When her husband died at Nome.
Both her kids exhibit cravings
For all kinds of fruits and nuts,
But they can't get 'nough of either
To distend their little guts.

There's a smooth absconding lawyer,
Wearing diamonds like a sport,
Who spends all his lucid moments
Praising Nome's imported Court.
He has beefsteaks in his stateroom,
Purloined by the pantryman,
While his clients in the steerage
Eat cold corn-beef from a can.

There's a Topkuk sub-receiver
Who is smuggling like a thief
All the gold the gang could gobble
For their late-transported Chief.
He indulges in fresh oysters,
Fine cigars and foreign wines,
While the man who first staked Topkuk
Tells us how they robbed his mines.

There are counts galore from Paris
And a few of them from Spain,
Who invaded Nome to traffic;
But they'll not do so again,
For they found their debts so heavy
That they had to leave them there,
While their unpaid Dago valets
Had to come out on the Bear.

Late last night they gave a banquet,
And imposed some heavy fines
To defray the steward's charges
For his bumpest brands of wines.
All the guests stood the assessment
Without making any kick,
But as soon as they get sober
They'll appreciate the trick.

I shall not recount the horrors
And the terrors of the trip,
For the same may be imagined
By all those who know the ship;
But I'll simply say in closing
That the most distressing fact
That has come to my attention
Is the way the ladies act.

LAT. 55, 54 N., LONG. 139, 18 W., Nov. 1, 1900.

L. of C.

Then I sent them to the censors of the 10-cent magazines;
But they wanted stuff from China or the unwhipped Philippines,
Or a lot of pictures showing how the British butcher Boers,—
Not a word about the pirates who infest your barren shores.

So I've had my verses printed, and I send them up to you,
Who for years have borne the burden, but are yet as staunch and true
As when first you blazed the pathway to the white and silent land;
And I know that when you read them you will feel and understand.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 1, 1901.

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